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Leza L Olson 09/01/2006 08:44:19 AM From DB/Inbox: Leza L Olson

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 003485

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/31/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [UN](#) [LE](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: UNSYG ANNAN IN ISRAEL: POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE BUT NO
AGREEMENT ON BLOCKADE

REF: A) BEIRUT 2805 B) BEIRUT 2797 C) TEL AVIV 3369

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones; reasons 1.4 (B and D).

¶1. (C) Summary: United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan met with Israeli PM Ehud Olmert, FM Tzipi Livni, DefMin Amir Peretz, Vice PM Shimon Peres, and the families of missing IDF soldiers during a visit to Jerusalem on August 29-30. Both sides characterized the talks as positive and productive, although they continued to disagree on when the GOI will lift its blockade of Lebanon. UN officials were pleased by detailed discussions of UNIFIL's rules of engagement (ROE), while the Israelis were less confident that these talks had resulted in any real progress. In both public and private, Annan stressed his desire to overcome what he called "stagnation" in the peace process. End summary.

UN Presses on Lifting Blockade and IDF Withdrawal

¶2. (C) After meeting with Olmert, Annan told the press that "I have been urging the immediate lifting of the blockade on Lebanon." A member of UN Special Envoy to the Middle East Alvaro de Soto's staff confirmed that Annan had raised the issue at each of his meetings, often focusing on the resumption of normal traffic at Beirut International Airport. Israeli officials said that the GOI had urged the UN to ensure a role for UNIFIL in enforcing the weapons embargo, especially along the Syrian-Lebanese border. In response, Annan had promised Olmert that he would raise the border issue during his discussions in Damascus and would ask Siniora to request assistance from a naval task force. Livni's staff said that she was dissatisfied with the UN's insistence that PM Siniora formally request assistance, something she did not believe he would ever do. Nonetheless,

MFA DG Aharon Abramovitch told the Ambassador that the GOI had been assured by the Secretary General that German border assistance to Lebanon would be provided under the UNIFIL rubric. Livni's staff noted that the MOD is currently working on an exact definition of what would constitute an "effective embargo" and trigger an end to the unilateral Israeli blockade.

13. (C) In public remarks, Annan implied that the Israeli forces should withdraw from Lebanon once UNIFIL has deployed its first 5,000 troops. A UN official told poloff that this level could be reached as early as September 1. Neither the PMO nor the UN had further details on the withdrawal discussions. They noted that almost two-thirds of the Annan-Olmert and one-half of the Annan-Livni meetings were conducted one-on-one. PMO, MFA, and UN staff members told post that they had only partial read-outs of those portions of the talks.

UN Hears Israelis Concerns Over UNIFIL's ROE

14. (C) Livni and Annan briefly discussed UNIFIL's rules of engagement (ROE) and concept of operations (CONOPS). UN staff and GOI representatives from the MFA, MOD, and NSC led by Abramovitch continued these talks later on August 30. UN participants told poloff that they had tried to convince their GOI counterparts that too much detail would tie the UNIFIL commander's hands. They were extremely positive about the outcome of the talks, while MFA participants expressed frustration that the session, in their view, had accomplished little except to allow the UN to claim it had discussed Israeli concerns.

15. (C) A UN official said that Olmert had also asked Annan to ensure that Hizballah is disarmed. Annan replied that this step will need to be part of a larger political process; any move along these lines by Siniora would result in a "civil war," he maintained, while any attempt to have UNIFIL do so would lead troop contributors to withdraw their forces.

Annan Urges Renewal of Peace Process

16. (C) According to both the UN staff and the Israelis, Annan stressed repeatedly that the international community wants an end to what he called the "stagnation" of the peace process. MFA officials said Livni objected that the Roadmap already provides an accepted framework for progress. In her view, the PA's inability to meet its international obligations should not elicit new initiatives. Annan suggested that new ideas under discussion in New York might result in progress and urged the GOI to make its own arrangements with the PA if it believes bilateral talks would be more successful. The UN staff said that Annan had reassured Olmert and Livni that Israel and other UN members will have sufficient input to any new ideas that might be introduced at the UNGA.

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JONES